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ABSTRACT

This report describes a personalized English proficiency, basic skills development, and personal counseling program to help Hispanics in Hartford, Connecticut to enter and successfully complete college. The program is jointly implemented by the University of Hartford, the Greater Hartford Community College, and Hartford State Technical College. The keystone of this program is a Learning Skills/Resource Center which provides multiple services focusing on the needs of Hispanics. The Intensive Summer Service and Fall Semester (1979-80) Services are described with emphasis on English as a second language, reading, mathematics, and study skills. Information on recruitment of participants, community outreach, student advocacy, resource gathering, personal and supportive services, collaboration efforts and continuing project activity, is provided. (RLV)

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HARTFORD HIGHER EDUCATION HISPANIC PROJECT

YEAR END NARRATIVE REPORT- Oct. 2,1979

ADDENDUM TO REPORT - December, 1979

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Hartford Higher Education Hispanic Project
Proyecto Hispano Universitario de Hartford

Funding the Project

A $104,000 grant from the Ford Foundation is enabling three urban institutions in Hartford, Connecticut, to jointly implement a personalized English proficiency, basic skills development and personal counseling program to aid Hispanic community members to enter and successfully complete college. The grant is for a one year period.

Establishing the Collaborative

The three institutions who formed the Hartford Higher Education Collaborative are the University of Hartford, a private institution, the Greater Hartford Community College, and Hartford State Technical College, both two-year public institutions. All have a firm commitment to the city and its multi-lingual/multi-cultural population. All have a record of participation in transitional language programs, both with each other and with other agencies and organizations.

Organizing the Learning Skills/Resource Center

The keystone of the joint program is a Learning Skills/Resource Center on the University of Hartford campus. It is located in the building which houses the College of Education and Allied Services. The Center provides multiple services focusing on the needs of Hispanic men and women of all ages who are either potential students or are enrolled at the member colleges. The

thrust of the program is on helping Hispanics enter college and successfully complete their programs.

A typical student utilizing the Center's services begins with a comprehensive, individualized assessment of needs and emerges with a personal plan for upgrading English proficiency and basic skills as well as an equally individualized approach to counseling.

The Center includes Spanish-speaking specialists in the service areas. Graduate students, faculty and staff from the participating institutions provide additional supportive services as the individual needs of enrollees become evident.

Providing Intensive Summer Service (1979)

During the 1979 summer semester, the Learning Skills/Resource Center staff of 8 specialists served 38 Hartford Hispanics including participants originally from such areas as Cuba, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Columbia and Peru. The curriculum centered on English as a Second Language (ESL), Reading and Mathematics. Study skills were also emphasized and supportive guidance services were provided.

For five full days a week during a six week period, participants experienced a learning environment which was structured to be as supportive and non-threatening as possible. Students in the summer program were generally maintained as a community. This created the positive circumstances which minimized attrition,

built interpersonal support systems and facilitated instruction to meet the specific, unique needs of the Hispanic students. Opportunities for interaction with other University summer session enrollees were ample and served not only to enhance English proficiency, but reduce any semblance of isolation.

Structuring the summer program as a community also provided the maximum potential for capitalizing on the linguistic similarity of the students in the learning situation. Although individualization characterized the instructional approach, the fact that participants were all Spanish-dominant facilitated the process.

Evaluating the Summer Session (1979)

Of the 38 students entering the summer program, 33 completed the 6 week series of developmental activities. Of this group:

... 9 or 27% previously attended college,

... 5 or 16% were in college in their native countries,

... 3 or 10% attended institutions collaborating in this project.

Since the completion of the summer session:

... 28 or 82% are now attending college,

... 23 or 70% are enrolled in institutions collaborating in this project.

Project success is also reflected in the great strides made in ESL, Math and Reading by those attending the summer session. Both objective and subjective assessments suggest that most students made gains of sufficient magnitude to meet the challenge of college entrance and, with continued assistance as planned, successfully complete their college programs.

Continuing Services-Fall Semester (1979-80)

During the present 1979-80 academic year, the Learning Skills/ Resource Center is offering a second cycle of developmental activities and supportive services to a second group of 54 Hispanics. Cycle II is being conducted in the evening to accommodate participants who work during the day or whose family obligations make attendance at an earlier time very difficult.

Although the Cycle II program replicates the Summer Session to a considerable degree, the detailed assessment of participants has indicated a need to establish four groupings. Included are:

... beginning level,
... intermediate level (I),
... intermediate level (II),
... advanced level.

Emphasis in the advanced group includes:

... reading skills in college curriculum (i.e. biology),
... library/research skills,
... introductory concepts in college subjects,
... discussion/reporting skills for college subjects.

Focal points in the intermediate level include:

... simple grammatical structure,
... oral communication skills,
... oral drills,
... reading comprehension
* inferential skills

... vocabulary building

... language lab

*stress and intonation

*pronunciation.

Concentration within the beginners level include:

... basic vocabulary skills

*sight vocabulary

... word attack skills

... introduction to English syntax

*pronunciation

*simple sentence structure

*interrogative

... dictionary skills

... language lab.

Additionally, the Center is providing Hispanics enrolled at the cooperating colleges with individualized academic assistance and counseling. A tutorial and/or small group approach is being utilized during the school day to further develop the requisite basic skills for college success.

Projecting Outcomes

Short-term outcomes of the program are anticipated by the staff to include:

... an improved recruitment program of Hispanic high school students and adults for the collaborating institutions,

... an improved potential for college admission of Hispanics,

... an improved level of assistance to Hispanic college students in English, basic skills and supportive services.

Long-term outcomes are expected to include:

... an increased number of Hispanic college graduates at all degree levels,

... an increased opportunity for employment of Hispanics,

... an increased opportunity for Hispanics to assume community leadership roles,

... an increased effectiveness in the development of instructional techniques and procedures to strengthen and extend bilingual/transitional education,

... an increased opportunity to share effective programs with other higher education institutions.

The Hartford Higher Education Hispanic Project has as its objective for Hispanic students the achievement of academic success rather than mere survival.

This project is the only post-secondary educational service for Hispanics in Connecticut. It is probably the only one of its type in the Nation. It serves not only to meet the needs of Hartford's Hispanic college bound and enrolled students, but is a model deserving of state and national replication.

HARTFORD HIGHER EDUCATION HISPANIC PROJECT

ADDENDUM TO THE
YEAR-END NARRATIVE REPORT
(December 1979)

The attached supplements the year-end narrative report of the Hartford Higher Education Hispanic Project submitted October 2, 1979.

Two factors necessitate this addendum to the initial report:

... the implementation of a second cycle of developmental activities and supportive services for Hispanics who are potential entrants to college,

... the desirability of providing additional information significant to project implementation in such areas as:

* recruitment,
* community outreach,
* advocacy,
* resource gathering,
* personal and supportive services,
* collaborative efforts,
* continuation activities.

RECRUITING THE PARTICIPANTS

Recruitment of participants was a primary function of the Project Coordinator, Martha Ayala and the Hispanic Affairs Coordinator, Edwin Martinez. In addition to the fact that they were both Hispanic, the process of recruitment was enhanced by the ability of Martinez to meet informally with prospective participants. Utilizing a "shirt-sleeve", "street-English" approach, he entered into groups which gathered in front of neighborhood stores or met in Hispanic community agency offices. He talked with them as they walked along the sidewalk or as they shopped the markets.

These efforts were supplemented by Ayala as well as Edna Jimenez, a staff member at the Hartford Community College who was actively involved in the project. Consortium college staff members with responsibilities in Admissions or the counseling of minority group students also contributed to the recruitment of project participants and assisted them in the process of applying to and entering college.

In addition to these approaches there were a variety of other techniques which included:

... meeting with Hispanic community groups,

... meeting with Hispanic agency groups,

... meeting with school system personnel,

... meeting with high school pupils,

... developing and distributing news letters and announcements,

... preparing and recording radio announcements,

... presenting radio and television interviews,

... preparing and arranging for newspaper releases,

... responding to telephone inquiries,

... responding to individual and institutional referrals,

... interpreting the program to the college faculties,

... conferencing with community and agency leadership.

In brief, the total approach was one in which the project staff demonstrated their ability to relate to the Hispanic residents, provide accurate information, interpret the opportunity for assistance and aid prospective participants to enter the program and continue on in college. The result was community acceptance and endorsement of the project and an overwhelming demand for admission to both cycles of developmental academic/basic skills activities.

REACHING OUT INTO THE COMMUNITY

Out-reach activities, to a considerable extent, are identical with the recruitment techniques described above. From an out-reach perspective, however, the physical presence of project staff out in the community demonstrated their concern for community involvement in the project and the content of the program. To physical presence was added such out-reach devices as continuing telephone contacts, conferencing with agency representatives, corresponding with community leadership and releasing informative materials to the media.

Such out-reach resulted in a broad-based community involvement in the project. The fact that the program content stressed academic English was not only the result of staff judgement but the expressed viewpoint of community leaders.

The impact of out-reach was evident in the kinds of inquires that came into the project office. In addition to serving as the center for project direction it also became a referral center as it assisted Hispanic residents with a variety of problems unrelated to the major focus of the project.

FUNCTIONING AS STUDENT ADVOCATES

Throughout the project, the staff has maintained an advocacy posture on behalf of Hispanic students enrolled in consortium colleges or those project participants seeking college entrance.

Assistance has been provided in such areas as:

... arranging for transportation to the project program,

... applying to college,

... applying for financial assistance,

... applying for scholarships,

... securing supportive services,

... securing community services and resources,

... resolving personal problems.

In fulfilling the advocacy role, project staff members have concentrated on "making the systems work" for Hispanics. The systems which comprise the community, the world of work, and the college need explanation for many Hispanics if they are to have access and utilize the resources which are available to them as community residents, workers and/or college matriculants.

For some students, explanations or agency referrals have been sufficient. For others, step-by-step assistance has been necessary. Taking a student

by the hand has been more than a figure of speech for the staff. It has been a near literal description of how they have guided students through the maze of applications and registrations related to college.

This much is certain. Hispanic students have had advocates not only in the staff of the project but in the total faculties and administrative personnel of the cooperating institutions. In some instances personnel in industrial firms have also functioned as advocates as they made arrangements for adjusting work schedules and providing limited financial aid.

GATHERING THE RESOURCES

The primary resources for the program have been the instructional staff and the materials they have researched and developed.

The caliber of the staff has been exceptionally high. Competent in the techniques of teaching Hispanics with limited English proficiency, the staff was an experienced, dedicated group who related well with students and provided them with a variety of activities designed to improve those skills essential to college entrance and continuation.

Instructional materials were from commercial sources and to a considerable extent, developed by the project staff to meet the specific needs of participants. Both classroom experiences and those in the University of Hartford Language Laboratory combined commercial and teacher prepared materials.

Assessment approaches also were a combination of commercial and teacher prepared evaluatory devices.

PROVIDING PERSONAL AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

The total resources of the cooperating institutions as well as those of the project staff were combined to provide a wide range of personal/supportive services to project participants. Such services were extended to both students enrolled in consortium colleges and those preparing for college entrance.

Listed below are varied services and activities which typify the comprehensive approach which contributed to the success of the project:

1. Conducting group orientation sessions on financial assistance,
2. Conferencing with individuals on financial need,
3. Arranging for financial assistance,
4. Assisting with college registration and enrollment,
5. Counseling individuals on academic matters,

6. Holding small group tutorial sessions,

7. Providing individual tutoring,

8. Arranging for student-student tutoring,

9. Providing academic assessment,

10. Referring students to community agencies for varied types of assistance,

11. Providing personal problems counseling,

12. Assisting with travel arrangements,

13. Serving as interpreter in student-faculty-staff conferences,

14. Arranging for group social gatherings,

15. Providing attentive, concerned listeners.

COLLABORATING FOR EFFECTIVENESS

Institutional collaboration was particularly effective in the planning process as well as in the implementation phase.

Major decisions were made cooperatively at sessions with each institution represented by the dean and a staff member meeting with the project staff. Such decisions ranged from fiscal matters to training program content.

Frequently, negotiations were necessary to firm-up decisions relating to the apportionment and/or sharing of services and resources. Such matters were approached and resolved in a cooperative manner reflecting the commitment for collaboration.

The project had access to and utilized the resources of the collaborating colleges. The University's Language Laboratory, the Community College's Spanish Math Program and the Technical College's community contacts in industry and business are examples of positive factors from each institution which were combined to contribute to project success.

Particularly significant as evidence of collaborative effectiveness was the supportive attitude demonstrated by the partners in this project. Visitation by faculty and/or administrative staff of the consortium colleges to the project's pre-college training sessions frequently demonstrated the continuing interest of the consortium in the program. Admissions personnel also gave evidence at each college of the interest in and concern for Hispanics entering the respective institutions.

CONTINUING PROJECT ACTIVITIES

At the conclusion of the project period, the momentum for increasing access to and continuation in college will be maintained by the respective colleges.

For example, the College of Education and Allied Services is adding to its staff an Hispanic with expertise in bilingual education and a wide background of experience in working with Hispanics. Dr. Sara Melendez will make a vital contribution to continuing the progress already achieved by the project.

Additionally, Project Access at the University well be available to students from the area who need English as a Second Language.

All three institutions will continue providing Hispanic students with supportive services to the limit of available resources.

Although financial commitments by state institutions (the Greater Hartford Community College and the Hartford State Technical College) are virtually impossible due to budget limitations, the appointment of Dr. Melendez at the University is indicative of the commitment to support the thrust of the project.

Equally significant, however, is the moral commitment which will guide each institution in their effort to more effectively serve the educational needs of Greater Hartford's Hispanic Community.

CYCLE II REVIEW

The intensive training sessions in basic skills and English as a Second Language have been extended into the next semester and, instead of concluding in December 1979, will continue until March 1980. Cycle II started in September with 4 levels of participants; Beginners, Intermediate I and II, and Advanced. The 1980 sessions will compress the 4 groups to 2 and reduce the present 36 students to 26.

Cycle II started with 60 students and presently has 36 participants plus 4 auditors. Drop-outs were conditioned by such factors as the need to seek employment, inability to arrange for child-care, personal problems and finding work and study too much of a load. Since Cycle II was designed to meet the needs of Hispanics who were working or could not attend training sessions during the day, a higher drop-out rate for Cycle II was anticipated.

Most important is the fact that of the 36 Hispanics in Cycle II, 10 students are applying to college for January admission and 26 will apply for September admission.

Cycle II concentrated more on content and deemphasized social activities. This was a reflection of less time being available than during the summer and the fact that many students arrived after work. Interestingly, there seemed to be a higher level of motivation and more concern with success. Several participants were professionals in the country of their origin and hold certificates and degrees.

Program content was similar to Cycle I, emphasizing academic English, reading comprehension, conversation, study skills and related competencies.